

**MCCPTA Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2012 Operating Budget
Before the Board of Education
January 19, 2011**

PTA Testimony attached from the following schools:

Clusterwide Testimony

Montgomery Blair High School

Eastern Middle School

Takoma Park Middle School

East Silver Spring Elementary School (K-5)

Montgomery Knolls/Pine Crest Elementary Schools paired PTA

New Hampshire Estates /Oak View Elementary Schools paired PTA

Piney Branch Elementary School (3-5)

Rolling Terrace Elementary School (K-5)

Takoma Park Elementary School (K-2)

(Note, Sligo Creek ES and Silver Spring International have overlapping articulation between Blair and Northwood)

East Silver Spring Elementary * Montgomery Knolls Elementary * New Hampshire Estates Elementary *
Oak View Elementary * Piney Branch Elementary * Pine Crest Elementary * Rolling Terrace Elementary *
Sligo Creek Elementary * Takoma Park Elementary
Eastern Middle * Silver Spring International Middle * Takoma Park Middle
Montgomery Blair High School
(Sligo Creek ES and Silver Spring International MS overlap articulation between Blair and Northwood)

Blair Cluster Testimony on FY2012 Operating Budget Before the Board of Education, January 19, 2011

Buenas noches President Barclay and Members of the Board,

My name is Susan Fleck. Amber Khan and I are the cluster coordinators for MCPS' Blair Cluster, representing 13 schools, about 7 percent of our county's public school students.

Dr. Martin Luther King would have turned 82 years old this past January 15th. Were he alive today, he would be proud of the many walls that have been torn down and the doors that have opened up. He would smile upon our school system's core values:

- ⇒ Being committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure that every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability, learns and succeeds.
- ⇒ Assuring that student outcomes not be predictable by race or ethnicity.

Legal discrimination has disappeared, but differences in educational outcomes persist. One egregious situation is our students who do not have legal immigration status and who face the most serious obstacles to success; sadly, we have no way to measure the impact of these students' immigration status and their 'shadow existence' on individual and overall academic success.

Thankfully, however, MCPS, the Board of Education, and school leaders and parents *are* dedicated towards erasing the *identified* and *quantifiable* differences. The MCPS strategic plan identifies and outlines goals to work towards addressing these inequalities.

- ⇒ On average, educational attainment of African American and Hispanic students, ESOL and special education students, continues to lag behind their fellow White and Asian students.
- ⇒ Disproportionately, suspension rates of African American and Hispanic students, and students receiving special education services, are often double or triple those of White and Asian students in our schools (<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/about/strategicplan/annualreport/2010/goal1/milestone4datapoint1.pdf>).
- ⇒ Hispanic and African American dropout rates remain higher than average, despite recent improvements. (<http://mdreportcard.org/Graduation.aspx?K=15AAAA&WDATA=local+school+system#dropout>)

How will we [ensure success for every student](#) and [provide an effective instructional program](#) as we face one of our toughest budget years ahead? **By reaching all children at whatever level they are, to get to where they should be.**

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Montgomery Blair High School

I think I am preaching to the choir in this room, where all of us here work to “open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children,” as Dr. King said.

Thanks to our conductor, Dr. Weast, for working hard to raise the bar and close the achievement gap. Your shoes will be hard to fill – a tough leader not worried about being liked, but working tirelessly to improve our students’ success.

Thank you, too, Dr. Weast for proposing a **maintenance of effort** budget, even though the County Council and County Executive think this price tag is too high. We understand this may be the opening position for bargaining, but the principles behind the budget are important to state – we must invest in our future, our children.



The Blair Cluster choir of parents and students have a favorite song, the Paul McCartney/Stevie Wonder song – Ebony and Ivory – it reflects our diversity and interest in creating community together. Here, I change the title to reflect our academic goals – Equity and Excellence.

Equity is the melody. Our cluster of 13 schools of 9,500 students – an increase of 250 students over last year! - comprises 6.5% of MCPS students, but almost 10% of all ESOL and FARMS students in the county – *18% of our students are in ESOL programs, and 41% receive free and reduced lunches.* We have 17 pre-k and headstart classrooms in our schools, 5 METS classrooms, 8 classrooms of countywide special education programs, and 17 classrooms of students with school based special education programs. *Five of our schools are Title 1 – East Silver Spring, Montgomery Knolls, New Hampshire Estates, Oak View, and Rolling Terrace.* *4 of every 10 Hispanic seniors at Blair High School did not graduate last year.* Many of our students face sizeable obstacles to academic success, and school itself can not be one of these obstacles. We need at-risk students to succeed for all schools to thrive. **If our schools have to face more cuts, please let them each decide individually how best to address them.**

Excellence is the harmony. The more than disproportionate budget cuts in the high school academies (60% over the past few years) and the staffing of special programs hurts our students and the reputation of our schools in the long run. The DCC survey recently conducted by PTA leadership shows that of 400 parents polled, half consider that the choice process improves the learning opportunities for their children and the reputation of our high schools. The majority support the choice process. **The drastically reduced funding in specialized learning, in magnet programs, special programs, and academies, has created a hole for the high achieving and different students who respond to the extra challenge or unique focus of study they used to receive.**

Reduced staff in special programs negatively affects efforts, such as the **Piney Branch ES** science program (now staffed with .6 of a teacher), the **Takoma Park ES** reading regrouping (no longer in existence), and the variety of classes offered by **high school academies** (much reduced) to create whole-school enrichment activities that reach all students.

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We hope to strike a chord with you in playing out our vision to the Board of Education:

 **Support the maintenance of effort budget.** Take a stand for our children and our future. If any reductions need to be made, do not make them in the classroom. Look to our principals for school-based solutions that do not take away from teaching. *Consider, for example, the Title 1 principals' recommendation to make summer school an invitation-only program, saving 2.8 million dollars in the process.*

 **Close the gap with continued support for academic intervention.** With five of our elementary schools facing local action due to not meeting FY2010 AYP for students from poor families, with limited English, or using special education services (these schools include **Montgomery Knolls, Piney Branch, Pine Crest, Oak View, and Rolling Terrace Elementary Schools**) and **Eastern Middle School** in year 1 of school improvement, the loss of an academic intervention teacher can determine whether AYP is reached. Our K-5 articulated schools range in size from 590 (**Sligo Creek**) to nearly a thousand (**Takoma Park with Piney Branch**), and most of these schools have no more than 2 academic and/or focus teachers. The reinstatement of half an AI specialist at **New Hampshire Estates ES** this past year has drastically improved MAP-R scores of 20 students. But **East Silver Spring ES** gained nearly 50 students and did not increase the number of teachers. Two AI staff at **Piney Branch ES** were deployed to reduce class size for better learning of Math and English, but they have no time to support LEP students transitioning out of ESOL. A shoutout goes to **Takoma Park MS** - an example to all in closing the gap by offering math to all students, *every day*, with support of the AI staff. Please do not take away our teachers and specialists. *Improve on staffing formulas that address the challenging educational load required of students in special education, ESOL and LEP, and schools with high FARMS and turnover rates.*

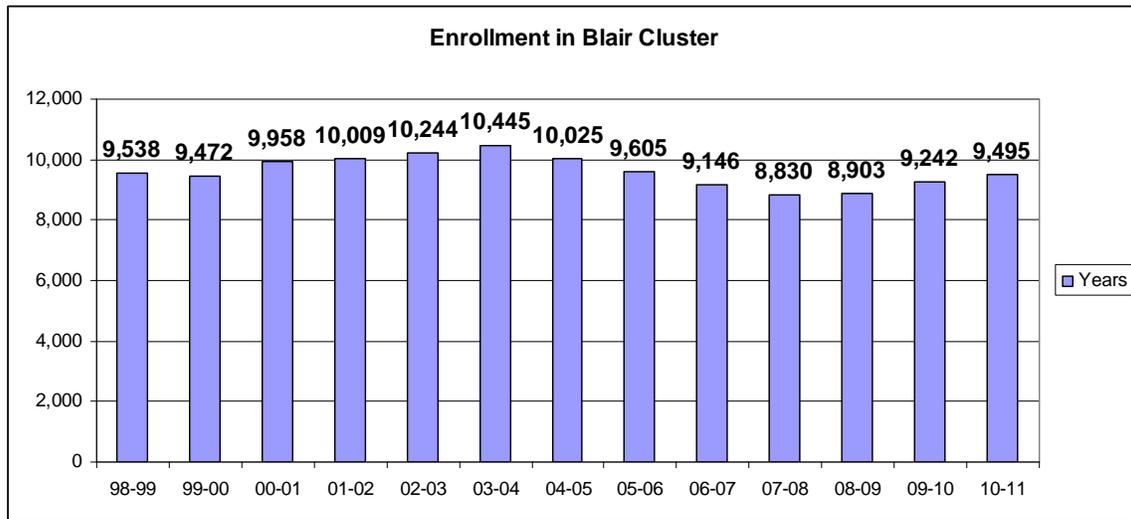
 **Maintain Title 1 spending per pupil.** *If there were a way to reduce central administrative costs within the Title 1 program and keep the per-pupil allocation at its current level of \$1,800 per student, this would allow the most critical support for our neediest students to continue.*

 **Support transportation needs in afterschool programs for students who do not live close to their schools,** especially **Sligo Creek, East Silver Spring, Oak View, and New Hampshire Estates.** The boundary changes for the first two and the articulation of the last two make it impossible for many young students to participate in after-school activities. **Blair HS** students no longer stay after school, now that they can not take Ride-on and there are no activity buses. *Small children can not walk far, and older children who could benefit from more studies and school exposure are heading home early.*

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🎵 **Support transportation for magnet and special programs.** The loss of bus service would affect the students who need it most.

🎵 **Don't increase class size any more.** *Our cluster experienced an increased enrollment of 250 students this past year, reaching 9,500 students.* Many of our schools increased the number of students without being able to hire more teachers, such as **East Silver Spring** and **Piney Branch Elementary Schools**.



🎵 **Maintain accelerated learning and special programs and high school academies.** The loss of funding for the academies has weakened the nature of choice. When parents come to the realization that budget cutbacks mean there are no academy coordinators and there are fewer offerings, problems of overcrowding and uneven reputation will rear their ugly heads again. Many special programs lost teacher and coordinator hours over the past two years, and all are working with a bare bones budget. *Raising the bar can only happen when high expectations for achievement show up in concrete curriculum.*

🎵 **Maintain other school-based resources and support professional training.** From Blair's lonely counselor processing transcripts for hundreds of **Blair HS** seniors, to one social worker covering half a dozen schools, non-teaching staff are stretched thin. Don't stretch them any thinner. For classroom teachers, professional training provides a vital resource for teachers to balance the wide range of needs and demands of students in their classrooms.

Here are the revised lyrics to the Blair Cluster theme song:

Equity and excellence live together in perfect harmony.
 Side by side in my PTA, oh why can't it be free?

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We all know that students need teaching wherever we go
There are A's and B's in everyone
Teachers stretch to teach
Students learn to reach
Towards the stars without bounds
No money around.

Thank you for listening to the song of 10,000 students and their families, and the
testimony of other Blair Cluster students and parents today.

Good luck in your decision making.



***Montgomery Blair
High School PTSA***
**51 University Blvd. East
Silver Spring, Md. 20901**

January 19, 2010

Good evening. My name is Tom Jacobson, president of the Montgomery Blair High School PTSA. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to address the operating budget issues.

Maintenance of Effort

Blair strongly supports the superintendent's maintenance of effort budget. Frankly at Blair, we are currently stretched very thin and cannot fathom where additional cuts would come. Our average class size is now 34 students, and many classes far exceed that number so that we can provide smaller class sizes to our English language learners and struggling students. And, because of a more strict policy of enforcement of minimum class sizes, Blair is not able to offer some of the rigorous classes it has in the past, including several AP classes. We simply cannot bear additional cuts to our professional staff. We now have only one media center specialist, one registrar and one College and Career Center staff person to serve a population of over 2800 students. Everyone pitches in as best we can. Staff work extra uncompensated hours and parents volunteers many thousands of hours each year, but we continue to feel we are barely able to meet the needs of our students.

Downcounty Consortium

The Downcounty Consortium and particularly the academies must be maintained and supported. The MCCPTA-DCC Committee conducted a survey of parents this fall and concludes that parents in the DCC like that their children have choices for high school and that parents believe the academies/signature programs are important to their children's academic and future successes. . 76% of parents responded that the most important factor that influenced their children's high school choice was its academies or academic programs . MCPS funding of the DCC has not been consistent with these parental beliefs and values. After federal grant funding to create the Down County Consortium expired, MCPS was not been able to maintain adequate funding to fully support the academies in the DCC high schools. In the last three budget cycles, academies/signature program budgets have been slashed drastically resulting in the elimination of release periods for academy heads, a 60% reduction in Academy Coordinator funding, and a reduction in money for instructional materials to support academies. The result of these funding cuts has been severe limitations on each school's ability to provide academy specific programming including elective classes, internships and capstone projects that help to define the programs that families expect in a consortium choice environment.

Transportation Issues

Transportation must be continued for our magnet and consortium students in order to continue success in those programs. We worry that if the transportation component is removed, fewer students will apply, and the impact will be most pronounced in our under-served populations. We are also concerned about the dearth of

activity buses now that the free Ride-on program for students after school has been discontinued. This year, the County Council discontinued the after school free Ride-on service and we have seen a huge drop-off in the number of kids staying after school, either for activities or help. I expect this will cause a ripple effect in other areas, including a rise in gang activity and more kids dropping out of school. A major question we have is what does the activity fee that is collected from parents for each middle school and high school student go to pay for? Shouldn't it be helping to pay for after school transportation? If it's not enough, then raise the fees, using a sliding scale based on ability to pay. We ask the activity fees be adjusted to ensure that activity buses can be provided.

College Support Positions

While MCPS's dedication to the "7 Keys to College Readiness" is laudable, we are worried that cuts to the very staff and programs that assist students in applying to college is undermining that effort. For example, at Blair, staff for our College and Career Center has been cut to one person. This one person is charged with helping students prepare and register for college admission testing, selecting colleges and completing college applications, completing the FAFSA and other financial aid applications, identifying and applying for scholarships. In addition, this one staff member arranges visits from college representative to Blair, and also helps identify internship and employment opportunities. That job is made more difficult by the great diversity at Blair, as well as the fact that we have large numbers of students whose parents have never been to college and have no idea how to manage the application process. With a school system focusing on the "Seven Key to College Readiness," it's rather incongruous to limit access to information on college and employment opportunities once students get to high school. We used to have an additional part time position in the college/career center and we desperately need it back.

Another example is found in our registrar's office, which has also been cut to one person. The most time sensitive job the registrar handles is sending out transcripts to colleges as requested by students. Clearly, the more students you have, the more transcript requests you will have. Blair used to have one registrar and one assistant. Now we have one registrar, the same as every other high school, regardless of the number of students. It is readily apparent that the job of registrar is much more demanding at a school like Blair with over 600 students per class, many of them applying to multiple colleges. As a result of understaffing there is a tremendous backlog, and at certain times of the year, a Blair student must submit their transcript request 6 weeks before the due date.

Student Activities Center Furniture

Finally, I'd like to make a pitch for replacement furniture for the Student Activities Center (SAC) or cafeteria. This room is used heavily both by students and the community. As a result, the furniture is in disrepair, and while pieces are removed, nothing has been replaced. This is likely an expense that should be shared with CUPF, but if it isn't done soon, we will have a big room with very little furniture.

I understand the budget issues facing you are immense. In making cuts, please try to minimize the impact on delivery of curriculum to students, keep teachers in the classroom, and make sure we provide an environment where all students can meet their academic potential. When cuts to the operating budget are made, the schools should be given some leeway to determine what positions should be cut. Each community and school faces different challenges. Allow the administrators, teachers and PTSA the flexibility to work together to determine budget priorities on a school by school basis so that the needs of the children at each school in Montgomery County are adequately met.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Jacobson, PTSA President
Jeanne Philbin, Blair Cluster Representative

Eastern Middle School PTSA
300 University Boulevard, East
Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 19, 2011

Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Board of Education Members:

The Eastern Middle School PTSA commends your efforts to craft a sustainable operating budget during our current economic downturn. We know that the “easy” cuts have already been made and the MCPS Maintenance of Effort budget put forth by Dr. Weast represents *no increase in per-pupil expenditure*. We acknowledge that the Board of Education may not know the final budget numbers until later this spring when the County Council completes its budget process.

The Eastern Middle School PTSA asked parents to share their experiences with MCPS, to tell you their children’s stories of challenges and successes. I incorporated many of their stories in my oral testimony, and have included copies of their postcards to you with this testimony (see appendix 1). Many parents were surprised to learn that the Board of Education would read their letters or care about what they had to say. What follows is a summary of the issues that came out of our discussions with parents and represent the most relevant issues to the EMS community. We ask you to use these as a guide when you are making final budget decisions.

Budget priorities should focus on the schoolhouse and classroom

We urge you to opt for continued staffing versus increased educational materials or technology. Teachers in the classroom, not technology, make the biggest difference to students. Any cuts in school programs or services should have minimal impact on classroom instruction.

Consider educational load and at-risk populations

We ask that you consider a staffing formula that recognizes the educational load in the most highly impacted secondary schools. Maintaining equitable staffing across all middle schools, based on need and educational load, is essential if we are to ensure that every school is able to meet the needs of all their students. Equity does not mean treating every school the same, it requires recognizing and addressing the huge gaps in preparedness among students entering middle school.

Eastern Middle School (EMS) has a diverse student population. Forty-six percent (46%) of our students qualify for FARM, 8% require ESOL instruction, and 9% of

our students require Special Education services. These indices have all increased from last year and are among the highest in the county. Students arrive at our school with a wide range of academic preparation, from new immigrants with limited prior education in their home countries (METS) to highly skilled learners ready for GT classes and the Humanities and Communication Magnet. The educational load on our teachers and support staff is high, and they work tirelessly to meet the varied needs of all of our students.

At-risk students require additional supports in order to meet their targeted academic goals. Academic intervention teachers work directly with individuals or small groups of students to address specific gaps in reading and math, helping the most needy and vulnerable of our students. High impact schools like EMS cannot make AYP and continue to support at-risk populations with ever-shrinking resources. Please maintain the current formula for hours-based staffing for Special Education, and increase the ESOL staffing to meet the increasing needs in our school.

Maintain support for the Humanities and Communications Magnet

Eastern hosts the Humanities and Communications Magnet, which attracts students from a wide geographical area. This program is vital to the diversity of our school, and the carry-over effect of the program is essential to the success of all students at EMS. The staffing for this program is absorbed into the general staffing. Thus, the impact of the magnet is felt across the board, not just in the magnet. In the past, the magnet support positions were reduced to 1.5 FTEs. Further reductions could weaken the program, make it less attractive to applicants, less rigorous and rewarding for enrollees, and diminish the positive impact of the program on the school as a whole. We ask you to maintain the current level of support for the magnet program.

Avoid further increases in class size

Last year an across the board increase in class size was implemented in MCPS. The result is that some of the classes at EMS now have 36 students. The PE classes have up to 41 students in each section, and with four sections per period this translates to over 160 students in the locker rooms at one time.

EMS has consistently been 30-40 students over projected enrollment. This year's projected enrollment was 785. At the start of school, there were 825 students enrolled. Next year the projected enrollment is 835. If additional staffing is not allocated, and 875 students enroll, the effects could be devastating. We would prefer a reduction in class size, but know that this may be unrealistic. However, we cannot sustain any additional increase in class size.

Continue afterschool academic and extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities are an essential complement to a child's education. In response to the change from block to seven-period scheduling, EMS now offers

for-credit foreign language and instrumental music classes after school. Thus, those students whose elective choices were limited by the schedule change are eligible for similar elective opportunities as other middle school students in MCPS.

The athletic and cultural arts afterschool programs offered at EMS keep students engaged and active and allow for increased shared experiences between the Magnet and Comprehensive students. A reduction in the stipends for these programs would limit the activities that could be offered, and an increase in fees to offset such reductions would severely limit participation from students whose families have limited means.

Maintain magnet and activity bus transportation

We request that magnet and after-school activity buses be maintained. Elimination of bus transportation to students attending a magnet program places the greatest burden on those students whose families are least able to provide the transportation themselves. It could also discourage a large population of students from even applying to the magnet. Also, given the wide geographical area served by EMS, there could be no afterschool programs without after school activity buses.

We urge the Board of Education to approve the proposed Maintenance of Effort budget as submitted by Dr. Weast and continue programs and services at current levels. If some cuts become necessary to fund the FY2012 Operational Budget, the Eastern Middle School PTSA requests that these reductions have minimal impact on school-based resources.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the EMS PTSA,

Tina Poole Johnson
EMS PTSA President

Linda Krimm
EMS Blair Cluster Representative



January 12, 2011

On behalf of the students, families, faculty and staff of Takoma Park Middle School, we submit the following budget priorities for Montgomery County Public Schools and the Board of Education for the 2011-2012 school year:

- Although we recognize the difficulties this year due to the sluggish economy and decreased local tax revenues, we strongly feel that Montgomery County must support a maintenance of effort level of funding for all of our schools
- We also urge that as tough funding decisions are made, the Board of Education must focus on protecting the items listed as priorities in the MCCPTA Operating Budget Priorities Resolution
- We suggest that, should cuts become necessary farther on in the process, there be a balanced approach to cutting, to allow schools to have maximum flexibility to adjust to diminished resources
- **Finally, and specifically to our school, we ask for continued support for our academic intervention (AI) staffing. The AI staffing allows TPMS to provide math to every student, everyday, as well as provide extra reading support for the students that need it. Because TPMS is not a middle school reform school, it is essential that we continue to have our AI staffing in order to maintain the successful programs that we currently have in place.**

Takoma Park Middle School is an awe-inspiring, award-winning, school, like no other. The student body is not only multicultural, but multi talented. Our school proves that with the right resources, along with dedicated staff, students and families it is possible to close the achievement gap.

Thank you for your attention,

The TPMS PTA

January 18, 2011

Dear Members of the Board of Education:

East Silver Spring Elementary School is a full Title One school serving K-4 students in the downcounty area.

While we understand the extremely difficult budget situation impacting all state and county services, our school has two issues which make this school particularly vulnerable to budget cuts.

First, East Silver Spring is in the final phases of being decoupled from Piney Branch Elementary School. This year, East Silver Spring added fourth grade, but had to do so with the same staff headcount. The school needed an additional teacher for the upper grades, which meant that the school was short a first grade teacher. This has resulted in a combined first and second grade class.

In the 2011/2012 school year, East Silver Spring will be adding the fifth grade, and we may again be asked to make due with the same number of staff. This may result in resources being pulled from advanced reading and math programs.

Second, a boundary study in 2010 resulted in a segment of East Silver Spring students being redistricted to attend Sligo Creek Elementary School. Transportation resources were not added to accommodate this move, so students at both schools have earlier pickup times and longer bus trips. This boundary change also exacerbated the issue listed above. It was estimated that due to redistricting, ESSES would have less students. However, with the addition of fourth grade, there was a **net increase of 47 students**, and the school had make due with the **same resources**.

For these reasons, ESSES simply cannot function effectively with a decrease in resources particularly in staff headcount. While the principal found a creative solution with combining classes, the school simply cannot lose staff particularly when the school will be adding fifth grade next year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Savoie
ESSES Cluster Representative

Montgomery Knolls-Pine Crest PTA
201 Woodmoor Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 19, 2011

To the Board of Education:

Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest Elementary Schools would like to thank the Board for its continued support, particularly during this difficult budget year.

We are particularly appreciative of the support MCPS has shown for its Title I schools and for designating Pine Crest as a focus school. We appreciate the Board's continued recognition of the special challenges faced by schools serving lower-income families and its support for programs that serve all of our students. The MKPC PTA would also like to thank the Board for its continued support for some of the specific programs and initiatives that have been important in meeting the needs of our schools including the Montgomery Knolls unique PEP and Pre-Kindergarten programs, and Pine Crest's technology magnet program.

The ongoing support of the Board has been instrumental to our ability to meet the needs of our students and will be essential to our continued success. Our highest priority is to continue those programs that have had the greatest impact on student achievement. These include:

- Small class sizes
- Professional development training at the system and school based level which impacts student achievement and teacher/administrative quality, including providing sufficient release time to allow teachers to take part in training;
- Full-time art, music and PE teachers in all schools;
- Extended learning opportunities through ELO and the George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy (Saturday school);
- County-based cultural arts field trips by grade levels for all students; and
- Administrative support at the elementary level.
- Academic intervention teachers at Title I schools
- After-school programs (many of our students do not have access to any other enrichment activities outside of school.

We urge MCPS to continue funding for all of these initiatives and programs.

Montgomery Knolls and Pine Crest would like to encourage the Board to support maintenance of effort funding for our schools. If this is not possible, we urge the Board to take a balanced approach to reducing expenditures that gives schools the flexibility to adjust to reduced resources in a way that best meets their individual needs.

Finally, the MKPC PTA appreciates the sacrifices that county teachers have made to forgo cost-of-living increases this past fiscal year and hopes that the Board will consider ways to retain staff during this difficult budget year, including by maintaining health insurance coverage for MCPS staff.

We would like to thank the Board for all of its hard work. We know that this is an extremely difficult budget year and we need to allocate money as efficiently as possible. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the budget and would like to support the Board in advocating for additional funding from the state to ensure that programs and positions that are particularly important to at-risk students are preserved. We appreciate the strong support MCPS has shown for all of our programs and look forward to continuing to work together to make the best decisions for our students and our communities.

Rebecca Iwamoto and Danielle DuClaux
PTA Co-Presidents
Montgomery Knolls-Pine Crest PTA



New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary Schools Parent Teacher Association



8720 Carroll Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20903

400 East Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20901

January 19, 2011

Carver Educational Services Center, Room 123
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Board of Education Members:

The New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary School (NHE/OV) PTA recognizes the serious challenges MCPS faces in crafting an Operational Budget this year. We know that the “easy” cuts have already been made, and the Maintenance of Effort budget put forth by Dr. Weast includes *no increase in per-pupil expenditure*. We acknowledge that the Board of Education may not know the final budget numbers until later this spring when the County Council completes its budget process. If cuts or reductions have to be made, we ask that you keep the most vulnerable populations at schools such as New Hampshire Estates and Oak View in mind when you make your difficult budget decisions.

The NHE/OV PTA asked parents to share their experiences with MCPS, to tell you their children’s stories of challenges and successes. I incorporated many of their stories in my oral testimony, and have included copies of their postcards to you with this testimony (see appendix 1). Many parents were surprised to learn that the Board of Education would read their letters or care about what they had to say. What follows is a summary of the issues that came out of our discussions with parents and represent the most relevant issues to the NHE/OV community. We ask you to use these as a guide when you are making final budget decisions.

Budget priorities should focus on the schoolhouse and classroom

We urge you to opt for continued staffing versus increased educational materials or technology. Teachers in the classroom, not technology, make the biggest difference to students. Any cuts in school programs or services should have minimal impact on classroom instruction. A smart board does not teach a child to read, a teacher does.

Consider educational load and at-risk populations

We ask that you consider a staffing formula that recognizes the educational load in the most highly impacted elementary schools. Maintaining equitable staffing based on need and educational load is essential if we are to ensure that every school is able to meet the needs of all their students. Equity does not mean treating every school the same, it requires recognizing and addressing the huge gaps in preparedness among students entering school.

New Hampshire Estates and Oak View are paired elementary schools with a diverse student population. The schools have FARM rates in excess of twice the county average – NHE 84% (364 students), OV 68% (210 students). The ESOL rate at NHE is 71% (308 students) and 58% (179 students) at OV. Eleven percent (48 students) at NHE and 15% (48 students) at OV require Special Education services. Students arrive at our schools with a wide range of academic preparation, from new immigrants who do not speak English and with limited prior education in their home countries to students ready for the advanced and enriched curriculum of the Highly Gifted Center. Some beginning kindergarten students do not know their colors or alphabet, have never held a pair of scissors or gone to a museum; others are doing multiplication and reading on a 4th grade level. The

educational load on our teachers and support staff is high, and they work tirelessly to meet the varied needs of all of our students.

ESOL and Special Education Staffing

NHE is currently short one ESOL teacher. Thirty-five English language learners enrolled after the start of the school year. No additional ESOL teacher positions could be assigned after October 1st, so these children were incorporated into existing ESOL classes, exceeding the class size maximum. We ask for that ESOL position to be reinstated and to sustain no further reductions in ESOL staffing. Also, we urge you to maintain the current formula for hours-based staffing for Special Education.

Academic Intervention

At-risk students require additional supports in order meet their targeted academic goals. The Academic Intervention position at OV was cut several years ago. Last year, a half time position was reinstated. This teacher works with 15-20 students who no longer qualify for ESOL or Special Ed support. Their MAP-R and Informal Reading Inventory testing results so far this year greatly exceed expectations. With the added intervention and support, these children may read on grade level for the first time.

Title I

High impact schools cannot make AYP and continue to support at-risk populations with ever-shrinking resources. Both NHE and OV meet Federal Title I criteria, and the Title I per pupil allocation has been reduced by \$1800 over the past five years. Addition cuts in Federal dollars are expected again this year. Neither school can sustain these loses, in addition to potential cuts from the County, and be able to meet the needs of the county's most vulnerable students. We suggest that MCPS reduce central administrative costs within the Title I program and keep the per-pupil allocation at its current level.

Staff Development, Reading Specialist, and Assistant Principal

In past years the Staff Development, Reading Specialist, and Assistant Principal positions were targeted for reduction or elimination at Oak View. We thank you for hearing our requests and retaining these vital positions. This year, with the roll out of the integrated curriculum, the Staff Development positions are more essential than ever and should be retained at any school undergoing this curricular change. The Reading Specialist serves 100% of the children at Oak View – from the children struggling with literacy to the advanced readers in the William and Mary program. The school simply cannot sustain any reduction in the Reading Specialist without a devastating effect on children's literacy and the school's ability to meet AYP. We believe that no high impact school struggling to meet AYP should be expected to bear the burden of further reduction in either the Reading Specialist or Staff Development positions.

Paraeducators

The paraeducators at NHE and OV support the classroom teachers in numerous ways. They provide individual and small group reinforcement to students struggling in math and reading. They provide lunch and recess coverage, assist special education students in meeting their IEP goals, and many assist with Level 1 and 2 ESOL students and communicate with their parents. These positions have been cut in recent years, and further cuts would undermine the schools' ability to meet the educational goals all the students.

Avoid further increases in class size

Last year an across the board increase in class size was implemented in MCPS. Due to high mobility rates, staffing is difficult to predict at both NHE and OV. At the beginning of each year the schools either scramble to fill positions required by a last-minute burst of enrollment, or they settle for larger classes. On the first day of school, several kindergarten classes had over twenty students. Despite hiring a new kindergarten teacher after the school year began, NHE still has several kindergarten classes with excess of eighteen students. For the demographic served by our schools,

this is too high. We would prefer a reduction in class size, but know that this may be unrealistic. Raising the class size further would jeopardize the recent gains in literacy at both schools.

Continue afterschool extra-curricular activities and reinstate activity buses

Extra-curricular activities are an essential part of education and development at every age. NHE sponsors several Saturday field trips per year to museums and cultural activities in the Washington DC area for students and parents, many of whom have never been to a museum before. Additionally, both schools provide rich offerings of after school activities. These programs provide stimulation and positive recreation for children who would otherwise not have access to these activities. A reduction in the stipends would limit the programs that could be offered, and an increase in fees to offset such reductions would severely limit participation from students whose families have limited means.

Being paired schools, half the students at each school are bused daily from one catchment area to the other. NHE and OV are 1.5 miles apart, do not share a common border, and require crossing busy intersections on University Boulevard and Piney Branch Road. This is not a walkable commute for elementary school students. Many of our families do not have cars and rely on public transportation. Without activity buses, only those students who live within walking distance from a school could participate in after school activities at that school. Funding for activity buses was eliminated this past year, and the PTA was able to cover part of the cost for one year. We are not a wealthy PTA, and we cannot sustain this support indefinitely. It is our belief that since MCPS paired NHE and OV, they should support this pairing in a way that does not place our children at a disadvantage.

Maintain magnet bus transportation

The Highly Gifted Center program was expanded to Oak View in 2007-08 to relieve the excessive wait list for the program at Pine Crest and to create parity between up county offerings. If bus transportation to students attending this program from outside his or her attendance area were eliminated, it would undermine the Center program at Oak View and all elementary schools with similar programs. Fewer students would apply, and the academic needs of the students served by these programs would not be met. Elimination of bus transportation places the greatest burden on those students whose families are least able to provide it themselves.

Consider offering ELO to at-risk students only

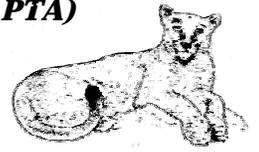
Summer Extended Learning Opportunity programs currently are available to all students. We ask you to consider the plan submitted by the Title I principals to Frank Stetson to make the program 'invitation only'. This would allow those students who need it to still have access to it and save \$2.8 million that could be reallocated for the academic year instruction.

We urge the Board of Education to approve the proposed Maintenance of Effort budget as submitted by Dr. Weast and continue programs and services at current levels. If some cuts become necessary to fund the FY2012 Operational Budget, the NHE/OV PTA requests that these reductions have minimal impact on school-based resources.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the New Hampshire Estates and Oak View Elementary School PTA,

Linda Krimm
NHE/OV PTA Cluster Representative

Katherine Ralston
NHE/OV PTA President



January 19, 2011

Dear Board of Education Members,

Thank you for hearing our testimony regarding Superintendent Weast's proposed FY12 Operating Budget. We are fully aware of the financial challenges facing Montgomery County, but urge the Board of Education and County Council to approve and fully fund the budget put forth by the superintendent. The proposed budget fulfills the Maintenance of Effort obligation to our students and accounts for the increased enrollment in our schools. If further cuts are made to the education of our students, Montgomery County Public Schools will no longer be reasonably considered one of the state and nation's top school systems.

Academic Intervention and Focus funding:

At Piney Branch Elementary, we've seen the dramatic effects of school level funding cuts. Like the other schools in the Blair Cluster, we are operating at a "bare bones" staffing level. Although we took in new students due to the boundary change this school year, our staffing does not reflect this increase. We currently have 1 Academic Intervention teacher and 1 Focus teacher, down from 1.5 and 1.2 in 2009-2010. This year, the highly creative PBES administration used these teachers to lower the class sizes for 5th grades during Language Arts and Math. With an average class size of 28 students in each 5th grade, an extra Language Arts and Math section were added and taught by our Intervention and Focus teachers. Our Focus teacher dedicated to math teaches accelerated math across grade levels and instructs 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, helping PBES to meet the MCPS goal of proficiency in advanced math by 5th grade. Although this staffing plan has been effective in meeting its goal, it has a significant downside: the Academic Intervention and Focus teachers are no longer available to provide added support to other students.

The group of students most acutely feeling this lack of support is our LEP (Limited English Proficient) students. Currently, we have 70 ELL students who are instructed by 1.8 ESOL teachers. Many of these students are ready to exit ESOL services. Unfortunately, due to the lack of Intervention and Focus teacher availability, these students are unable to receive the support they need once they exit the ESOL program, and as a result, they are less successful in classroom learning.

Any further reduction in funding in these areas will clearly be reflected in the school's ability to meet the needs of students, even to the limited extent possible at present.

Magnet Funding:

The MCPS strategic plan states: "All schools will increase enrollment and performance of all students in gifted, Honors, Advanced Placement, and other advanced programs, while decreasing the disproportionate enrollment and performance of minority students." Several years ago, Piney Branch was the ideal example of this goal in action. We had a thriving science, math and technology program, with 3 full time teaching positions, designed as an extension of the Early

Piney Branch Elementary School Parent Teacher Association, Inc. (PBES PTA)
7510 Maple Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912



Childhood magnet program at Takoma Park Elementary. Since 2008, the program has been disproportionately cut relative to other magnet programs, and we are now down to a .6 (3 days/week) science lab teacher. Unlike other magnet programs, ours serves ALL the students at the school; whether they have been identified as gifted/talented or not. Our award winning science lab teacher is truly inspiring to everyone at PBES. Under her direction, Piney Branch consistently sends teams to the Final Frontiers competition. This year's team was comprised of 5 White students, 1 Asian student, and 7 African American students, clearly demonstrating the participation of minority students in advanced programs and accurately reflecting the diversity of students at PBES.

Our science MSA scores also reflect the positive effects of increased science instruction. From 2008- 2010, we went from 60.8% of students scoring proficient or advanced to 76.1% scoring proficient or advanced.

In another demonstration of creative planning, the Piney Branch administration has managed to set up a schedule where all students visit the Science Lab every other week. However with just a modest increase to .8 for our magnet funding, all 480 students would get to attend the science lab for enriched instruction every week.

We applaud our excellent principals: Bertram Generlette and Kara Tymon, and our school leadership team for their outstanding work in dealing with the budget cuts we've sustained over the past several years. No amount of creativity and effective leadership, however, can make up for any further cuts to our school level staffing. The Board of Education and County Council must approve and fund the proposed Operating Budget if our schools are expected to continue to educate all students successfully and at the superior level demonstrated by MCPS.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ally Zevin
PTA President

Jenny Ash-Maher
PTA President

Vineda Myers
Cluster Representative

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Rolling Terrace Elementary School

705 Bayfield Street • Takoma Park, MD 20912 • 301-431-7600

Testimony delivered January 12, 2011

Good evening to Board members, parents, MCPS staff, students and guests. My name is Ana Valdez Ovalle and I am representing the community of Rolling Terrace Elementary School in Takoma Park which includes the students, the PTA, the Parent Involvement Committee, and Padres Latinos en Acción. Thank you for the opportunity to present the needs of our community.

During these critical economic times, we strongly feel that the budget priorities that the MCPS BOE should focus on for the 2011-2012 school year should be as follows:

- Continue to support small classes for all our students.
- Continue to support our Reading and Math Specialists and programs they teach. All our students need to be proficient and advanced in these fields.
- Continue to support TITLE I schools. Rolling Terrace is a Title I school and one of the largest in Montgomery County. In addition, our Title I schools need continue support for ELO (Extended Learning Opportunities) in the summer and commitment to support full day Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten for our children.
- Continue to recruit qualified teachers and staff who better represent the actual composition of our minority student populations.
- Continuing funding PBIS and integrate CIVICS discourse in the curriculum for all students.
- Continue to fully staff our ESOL programs.
- Support an additional counselor for our school population which is highly impacted by the issues of unemployment, cultural, and language barriers
- Continue support for the school based Parent Community Coordinators.

- Continue to keep the foreign Language Immersion Magnet funding and staffing in our school.
- Continue to provide professional development for our teachers to provide high quality instruction to all our students including our highly achieving students.

Rolling Terrace Elementary School is a multicultural school. Our parents expect the best education to their children. The children who are attending school in this county will be the workforce of Montgomery County in the near future. We need an educated and skilled workforce so that we can continue to live well in our communities. Therefore, it is imperative that the Board of Education continue to prioritize high quality instruction for our students. Also, we urge the BOE to continue to support the other essential programs we have at Rolling Terrace Elementary like the Judy Center and Linkages to Learning. These programs also provide essential tools for success for all our students.

Thank you for your attention and considerations.